

## RURAL ENGLAND CIC: BUSINESS PLAN 2021/24

### 1.0 OVER-ARCHING INTRODUCTORY COMMENT AND CONTEXT

Rural England Community Interest Company (RE) is a small organisation by any measure- taking the 20/21 Financial year estimates the Company has an estimated turnover of income generated in the year of just under £55000 and just one part time member of Administration/Support Staff.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has not had a significant impact on the Company's Business but has created some delays in delivering projects – these were negotiated with 'external funders' where appropriate. That said because of national restrictions on travelling and face-to-face meetings there has been a beneficial impact on the budget. Virtual meetings will now become more of a norm. Some research projects which originally included some face-to-face interviews have had to proceed virtually or by survey with resultant delays.

Whilst the Company has significant aspirations those must be grounded in reality.

As set out in this Business Plan the Company will seek further Research Opportunities and Research Associates to increase research capacity- however, the Business Plan for 2020/23 needs to be based on the known resources (financial and human) at the time of writing ( March, 2021)

In that context, **The Annual Outcomes as set out in this business plan can be summarised as being (at a minimum):**

- We would carry out the State of Rural Services (SORS) Research/Report every 3 years. The next is due to be worked on during 2021 and published by early 2022. SORS reports were produced by RE in both 2016 and 2018, which looked at recent trends and the current availability of a range of services (variously delivered by the public, private and VCS sectors) in rural areas of England. These reports were largely based on collating existing evidence, although some secondary analysis of data was included.

The shape of the 2021 SORS report will be different. Although some recent statistical evidence is still expected to be included for context, the intention in this report is to pay particular focus to the medium to long term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions. This will involve drawing as heavily as possible on evidence and intelligence drawn from RE stakeholder organisations. It is intended to make the 2021 report more of a joint effort with the RE Stakeholder Group.

- In the years we were not doing SORS we would carry out other (detail to be determined each year) research
- In each year for the 3 years for which there are committed funds from the Supporters Rural Vulnerability Research Panel there would be a report on that research. 2021/22 is planned to be the second of those years.
- There would be a research report funded by the Calor Research fund (which may spread over 1 or 2 years).
- Each year there would be a Rural Vulnerability Day in Parliament. This we be a virtual event in May 2022 in respect of the 2020/21 financial year.
- We would participate in the utility company Supporters Vulnerability Panels as contracted
- Each year there would be a Supporters Day event to outline our recently completed work and our plans for upcoming work.

## 2.0 BUSINESS PLAN VISION, OBJECTIVES, KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, KEY PARTNERS AND CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

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Better outcomes for rural people, businesses and communities, as a result of an improved rural evidence base.

### **Vision and mission**

Rural England aims to deliver this by: producing independent rural research and analysis; assisting networking among rural interest organisations; supporting the exchange of rural evidence; and encouraging informed policy debate.

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### **Objectives**

1. To undertake and publish robust research that focusses on the unique challenges or opportunities facing rural communities.
  2. To disseminate and promote the findings of published research to key decision takers and policy makers.
  3. To maintain and develop the relationship with the Stakeholder and Supporter Groups so that their members inform and use research undertaken by Rural England as appropriate.
  4. To seek to expand our research capacity.
  5. To maintain and secure income so Rural England can operate as a financially sustainable organisation.
  6. To put in place and develop policies and procedures relating to the good governance of Rural England Community Interest Company.
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**Objective 1:** To undertake and publish robust research that focusses on the unique challenges or opportunities facing rural communities. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

Key Partners	Key Performance indicators (KPIs)	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the RE Stakeholder Group.</li> <li>• Agencies (public, private and civil society sectors) with a particular topic interest.</li> <li>• The Rural Coalition Membership.</li> <li>• Rural Services Network and ACRE (as holders of rural services data).</li> <li>• Rural England Supporter Group members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of Rural Services (SORS) Report to be commenced in 2021 and published by early 2022</li> <li>• Whenever possible two further research projects are commenced each year [for 2021/22 the Projects at the time of writing are unspecified but there will be a report funded by the Utility Providers Research Panel and one using the annual research funding from Calor</li> <li>• A Task and Finish including RE Stakeholders is established for each research project (other than the Utility Company projects which have their own group) to shape the project and its communication strategy</li> </ul>	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that can inform better policy making appropriate to their wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanism for targeted engagement in the work of Rural England.</li> <li>• Evidence to support their own policy influencing activities.</li> </ul> <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence to support policy development and evaluation - leading to better policy making</li> <li>• Recommendations to improve rural evidence base.</li> </ul> <p>Researchers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about rural evidence base and gaps within it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government departments and agencies</li> <li>• Local authorities</li> <li>• Other service providers and commissioners</li> <li>• Rural interest groups</li> <li>• Parliamentarians</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Key Resources</b></p> <p>Annual funding from Calor Ltd for research  Utility Providers Research Panel membership  Researcher time  Input from Other Directors and Associates  Rural and research expertise  In kind support from RE stakeholders  Intellectual property  RE &amp; RSN Support Staff  Potential to work with the NICRE Project</p>	<p>To funding supporters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profile for their support.</li> <li>• Evidence of their Corporate Social Responsibility.</li> </ul> <p>Publicity and profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profile for Rural England as a research body.</li> </ul>	
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**Objective 2:** To disseminate and promote the findings of published research to key decision takers and policy makers. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>KPIs</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Customer Segments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the RE Stakeholder Group.</li> <li>• Members of the RE Supporter Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high - profile launch for at least one piece of research as part of the Annual Rural Vulnerability Day event.</li> <li>• To give effect to the dissemination strategy adopted for each piece of research.</li> </ul>	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that will inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanism for targeted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government departments and agencies.</li> <li>• Local authorities.</li> <li>• Other service</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies (public, private and civil society sectors) with a particular topic interest.</li> <li>• National and local politicians representing rural areas.</li> <li>• Academic and research institutions.</li> <li>• Funders and partner organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RE Directors, Stakeholders and Supporters are kept apprised of progress on research activity at appropriate intervals</li> </ul>	<p>engagement in the work of Rural England.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that supports their own policy influencing activities.</li> </ul>	<p>providers and commissioners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funders where research is relevant to their line of work.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Key Resources</b></p> <p>Researcher time  RE and RSN support staff time  Rural and Research expertise.  Intellectual Property.  In kind support from RE stakeholders  Professional PR assistance (Lexington)  Intellectual property  Professional PR assistance where appropriate</p>	<p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence that supports the rural proofing of policies, strategies and plans – plus their evaluation - leading to better policy making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parliamentarians.</li> <li>• Rural interest groups.</li> </ul>

**Objective 3:** To maintain and develop the relationship with the Stakeholder and Supporter Groups so that their members inform and use research undertaken by Rural England as appropriate. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the RE Stakeholder Group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The working arrangement agreed with the stakeholder group in 2019 is kept under review.</li> </ul> <p>Each research project (other than the</p>	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes evidence that will inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government departments and agencies.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporter Group.</li> </ul>	<p>Utility Company projects which have their own group to scope and guide the projects and externally commissioned projects) is supported by a Task and Finish Group including with members drawn from the Stakeholder Group</p>	<p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanism for targeted engagement in the work of Rural England.</li> <li>Evidence that supports their own policy influencing activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authorities.</li> <li>Other service providers and commissioners.</li> <li>MPs and Peers i.e. Parliamentarians.</li> <li>Rural interest groups.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Key Resources</b></p> <p>RE Directors  Researcher time  RE and RSN support staff time  In kind support from RE stakeholders  Intellectual property</p>	<p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence that supports better rural policy development, delivery and evaluation leading to better policy making</li> </ul>	

**Objective 4: To seek to expand our research capacity.** Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors.

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic Institutions</li> <li>RE Stakeholders Group.</li> <li>Research Associates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the approved processes for appointing Research Associates.</li> <li>Keep under review the possibility of periodically employing someone part time to secure additional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to conduct rural research which requires external skills.</li> <li>Ability to undertake more research which exceeds in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other service providers and commissioners.</li> </ul>

and/or partner organisations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural Services Network.</li> <li>UK RPPRG Conveners (at CCRI, SRUC, QUB and Cardiff University).</li> </ul>	research capacity	house capacity and where funding is secured. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved offer to commissioners etc. of research.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Key Resources</b> Contacts of Directors, Stakeholder and Supporter Group Members RSN Support to attendance at the Vulnerability Panels of Supporter Group Members with Extended Services or who are members of the Utility Providers Research Panel.		

**Objective 5:** To maintain and secure income to support Objectives 1 – 4 and 6 and ensure Rural England can operate as a financially sustainable organisation. Budget details in monthly budget reports to Directors

<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>KPIs</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Customer Segments</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RE Supporters Group.</li> <li>RE Stakeholders</li> <li>Commissioners and funders of research</li> <li>Charitable trusts, foundations and grant givers relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget Reports to Directors and Supporters Group.</li> <li>Run an annual Supporter Group event to outline RE work undertaken and planned, and to understand better rural issues or opportunities for their sectors.</li> <li>Keep under review the possibility of periodically</li> </ul>	<p>To rural communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence that may inform better policy making relevant to their wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>To RE stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence to support their own policy influencing activities.</li> </ul> <p>To national and local policy makers and politicians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher education sector.</li> <li>Commissioners of rural research and analysis.</li> <li>Other rural research consultants or research bodies.</li> </ul>

to research	employing someone part time to secure additional research commissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence to support policy development, delivery and evaluation - leading to better policy making</li> </ul>	
	<b>Key Resources</b>  In kind support from Directors		

**Objective 6:** To put in place and develop policies and procedures relating to the good governance of Rural England.

Key Partners	KPIs	Value	Customer Segments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RE Supporter Group</li> <li>RE Stakeholder Group base or interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce annual statutory accounts and Directors' Report in a timely manner.</li> <li>Annual Review of Business Plan and Strategic Risk Register 2021 -2024</li> <li>Application of agreed policies and procedures – including in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Template contractual</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	To RE stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence that RE operates in a transparent, fair manner that conforms with any legal or regulatory requirements</li> </ul> To RE supporters/funders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence that RE operates in a transparent, fair manner that conforms with any legal or regulatory requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private sector operating in rural areas.</li> <li>Grant giving and research commissioning sectors.</li> </ul>

	<p>agreement/memorandum of understanding for research associates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Recruitment/selection procedure for associates for specific research projects</li><li>○ Working arrangements agreement with Stakeholder Group</li></ul>		
	<p><b>Key Resources</b></p> <p>Directors time In kind engagement from RE Stakeholders and Supporters External RE appointed Tax Accountant.</p>		